ARCHÆOLOGY AS A SUBJECT OF ANTIQUARIAN STUDY

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF GLASGOW, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1891

BY

PROFESSOR JOHN FERGUSON, M.A., LL.D.

F.R.S.E., F.S.A. LOND., F.S.A. SCOT.

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

My first duty this evening is to return my most sincere thanks to the Society for the honour it has done me in promoting me to be its President for the ensuing term of office. I can assure you I heartily appreciate this mark of your approval and confidence, and can only say that, whatever is required to promote the welfare of the Society, I shall endeavour to compass to the best of my ability.

Never until now, when I have to address you and am almost called upon to justify your choice, have I fully realized the magnitude of the subject to the cultivation of which this Society is devoted, and the smallness of my own acquaintance with it. I have tried to bring the scope of archæological study within my own ken, but after various efforts it is only with greater bewilderment as to where archæology begins and where it ends that I rise from considering the topic. The only consolation I can find is that there are others who seem to be much in the same predicament as myself.

The first difficulty which presents itself to me is that of a definite starting point. The very term *Archæologia* is of most respectable age and authority. A word that was used by Plato to denote the study of antiquity is not only *old*, *antique*, relatively to us, but it indicates that Plato too had a former time, going up into a still more remote past, which to him seemed worthy of examination. "Discourse of things old" is the meaning of the term, and from its etymology it would appear as if its subject were unrestricted except by the question of time: When do things become old? As in a merely rational and scientific way it is impossible to go back to an absolute beginning and affirm: "there is no past," so there was never a time in the records of the race when mankind seems not to have felt the influence of a previous time and to have shown a disposition to inquire into the origin and significance of whatever has come down from

it. Archæology can claim to be, of necessity, one of the very oldest of subjects. While every era has had a relatively earlier era which has been its *antiquity*, nothing which has been done in it can be excluded from the view of the antiquary who examines it. All man's thoughts, actions, works, existent as they have been in time, must have an archæology.

In the widest sense then, archæology would seem to be simply the record of the past history of man. This definition, which may be objected to by pursuers of special themes as trenching on their departments, and by others who, while concerned with apparently mere present-day topics, would scorn the imputation of being archæologists, will be found nevertheless to be pretty nearly correct upon careful consideration of it. Many of these independent sciences are but elaborated departments of archæology in general. Archæology is not identical with but includes ethnography and anthropology; even with geology it has themes in common; it cannot be, or ought not to be dissociated from political and international history; it can claim as essentially its own the domestic and social history of races and nations. If the minute study of manners and customs, of beliefs and superstitions, of traditions and legends, has of late years set up for itself under the useful and distinctive and comprehensive title of Folk-lore, it is not that it can pretend to be anything else than a branch of archæology, but only that it is sufficiently extensive to engage the attention of a large number of investigators, to whom other sections of antiquarian study are less attractive or accessible. It is the same in every other department; for most archæologists, one perhaps ought to say all, when it comes to actual research, are forced to specialize and have to be content with something more easily grasped than what remains of the past existence of the whole of mankind on the earth.

This totality, however, which is beyond the reach of the individual antiquary, is striven to be attained by the combined efforts of many all over the world, and it is the record of these combined efforts, which it is so overwhelming to contemplate, and which produces a feeling of hopelessness of knowing the ultimate direction of even the main lines of study, any one of which seems to afford material enough for endless labour. The macroscopic and microscopic extent of the subject is to me its second difficulty. Should one be ambitious to ascertain the humiliating limits of

one's archæological knowledge, it is quite unnecessary to take a very wide survey. One has only to think of the numerous societies in Britain alone, dedicated each of them to little else than the antiquities of some town or district, recording the local words and customs and legends, gathering into safe keeping the material relics of previous times, preserving, as far as the corroding tooth of time and the physical agencies of nature will admit of, buildings, monuments, structures of all kinds raised by the hands of generations long passed away. These societies are all doing good work for the common cause, but how difficult it is to follow what they have been and are doing, to classify and systematize it, and to appraise thoroughly the merits of all the different kinds of research. Again, one has only to think of the journals and other works issued by the societies, and the magazines which treat of antiquarian matters, and which do their best to describe work that is prosecuting everywhere. Constantly also elaborate monographs appear, dealing with topics which either have never been investigated before, or have been recently illumined by fuller light.[1] Should one, however, imagine that the antiquities of Britain are too circumscribed to satisfy his capacity, and that that field is for him easily exhausted, he has but to extend his labours to the other countries of Europe, in any one of which he will find quite as much to do as in Britain, and if after that he has still leisure, there is occupation for him in the antiquities of Asia, Africa, and America.

If, then, it be a hopeless task for any single person to acquire merely the knowledge of what has been done, not in all departments of archæology, but in any one of them, it is an absolute impossibility for him to form a critical opinion, based on personal research, on the ever-increasing and appalling mass of new discoveries relating to the entire past history of the human race in every conceivable relation, and on the ever-changing views and hypotheses, accepted and contradicted, to which these new discoveries are constantly giving birth. I can speak for myself as in that depth of despair which is past seeking for a remedy. I cannot grapple with such a huge problem as the origin of the Aryan race, if there be such a race. I am a listener merely when the discourse turns upon the transmission of legend and fable

[1] While archæological literature is rich in many ways, there is still want of a review and of a bibliography of the new books in all sections, and a systematic year-book of discovery in all departments.

from nation to nation. Of the ancient science hidden in Egyptian and Mexican hieroglyphics, and of the magic spells on cuneiform tablets, I can never hope to gain any notion at first hand. The Etruscan tomb reveals remains of life which to me are mysterious well nigh as those of death. There is not a cathedral or ruined abbey that does not afford apparently inexhaustible material for discussion, for flights of imagination, and for gusts of temper, all of which I have much difficulty in comprehending. Were I turned loose into a kitchen-midden to-morrow, I should not know what to look for, or what to do with it after I got it. I should certainly not be able to trace in it the transition between the palæolithic and neolithic culture as I believe I ought to do. It would be but a repetition of the great pearl slander as immortalized by Æsop. If, as nearest of entail to the original owner, I should unexpectedly become the encumbered proprietor of a long-unoccupied and sadly ruinous lake-dwelling, with three acres—of water —and a—*bos longifrons* (and perhaps a water-horse) attached, I should not know how to set about repairing and furnishing it, or how properly to fit up a lake-byre for my stock. Raths, hill forts, vitrified forts, nawamees, brochs, standing stones, menhirs, cairns, cromlechs, circles, crosses, serpent mounds, weems, caves, keeps, kaims and camps are all beyond my powers both of analysis and synthesis. I have a profound and comprehensive ignorance of bone age and stone age, of bronze age and iron age. I am unskilled in runes, and oghams and celtic knots, in cists and urns, in stone coffins and monumental brasses. I do not know what difference there can be between a Pict and a savage, even after perusing Harry Maule's famous booklet (very rare by the way) on the subject. Nothing could be rasher on my part than to express any opinion as to which of all Queen Mary's portraits is most unlike her, and whether it was her own hair or her wig that was yellow. Others must decide what is the shape of the bell in the Glasgow city arms, and whether *Glasgow* means *green tree*, or the second *greyest*—and dirtiest—city in the empire.

To judge, however, by the activity in every large department and tiniest section of it, there is no study more popularly attractive, of apparently wider, more general, and more diversified interest, than archæology, the lore of ancient things. Along with this popularity, however, archæology suffers a certain measure of despite, to understand which is another difficulty that

has met me in contemplating its position. That archæology should be popular seems natural enough; that it should ever be spoken of lightly by any one who thinks, is paradoxical. It is true that the interest in any subject, after what can be immediately got out of it on its first appearance for the curiosity or the needs of man, soon passes into the hands of the historian and antiquary, if it is to be remembered at all, and ceases to appeal to the ordinary run of men engaged in their daily avocations. To the latter, indeed, no event, however momentous, which happened, not years, but it may be only a few months before, but is consigned, as speedily as possible, to the limbo of what the would-be quite modern man, the self-styled man of progress, terms contemptuously "ancient history."

This estimate, however, of the past, and of the taste and skill for investigating it, is not confined to him who despises yesterday's newspaper just because it is not to-day's. If it were, one would deal leniently with it in consideration of the mental deficiencies which it reveals; but it furnishes occasion for reflection when one finds similar views expressed by those who would claim to have cultured sympathies.

One may hear even the philosopher, whose time passes in investigating the opinions of this, or that, or the other philosopher, who flourished fifty or a hundred, or a thousand or two or three thousand years ago, pronouncing some non-philosophical subject to be "merely of obscure antiquarian interest," with the implication of course that out of such a question nothing inherently of value could ever be derived. But, in truth, without obscure antiquarian investigations the philosopher would never have had the works of the thinkers of a byegone age, which he deems so valuable. The Plato or Aristotle of to-day, the very school edition, represents an incalculable amount of antiquarian labour, bestowed not upon these writers only, but upon the whole of Greek literature and archæology, in the better understanding of which each individual author shares. The philosopher, therefore, who may find scope for his ability in speculation rather than in investigation, is nevertheless dependent upon and is controlled by the archæologist. No one who undertakes to expound a previous philosophic system, or to comment on the work of a previous thinker, but to all intents and purposes is engaged in an antiquarian research, however much he may shelter himself under a more flattering euphemism.

With a better show of reason, perhaps, is indifference to the "discourse of previous things" displayed by students of natural and physical science. In no department of thought do discoveries and theories grow more rapidly out of date, not to say antiquated, than in science, and then they are either altogether forgotten, or are incorporated with the general system of truth about nature, without a glance being vouchsafed either at their discoverer or at their own history. To the investigator in science the history of discovery hardly appeals at all. What has been found out, what is already known, concerns him only in so far as it is true or false, and as it will assist him in making fresh discoveries. The history and philosophy of discovery as an element in the mental and spiritual growth of man, the byegone discussions on moot points, the very terms of which are no longer intelligible, the errors into which former workers fell, the discovery which was within the grasp of the experimenter and yet eluded him, the personal and even national controversies over questions of priority, concern him not at all in his own special work. So when you speak to a modern scientific man about the development or decay of a theory, or the historical conditions which led up to a discovery, and warn him that the like fate surely attends his own, he too thinks to demolish you with the stock phrase—"of mere antiquarian interest." The paradox, however, not to say the contradiction, lies in this, that those who use such a phrase hesitate not to plunge into the beginnings of language, or of myth, or of religion, or into evolution, or in one word, into the *origin* of man, of life, of the very creation of things, thinking that these are subjects of all-important interest for to-day, whereas they are nothing if not archæological, making the largest of all drafts upon time, and carrying their students back almost into original chaos, or, if they do not do so, are little else than uncontrolled speculations. Whereas the more humble-minded antiquary who finds his work hard enough within the region of fact, and tries to explain some real difficulty or solve some small problem, is considered to be little more than a dilettante and a trifler, though it may be on his facts alone that the philosopher is able to erect his speculation.

The study of any literature, ancient literature necessarily, but a modern literature just as much, involves archæology of more kinds than one. The student of a literature, certainly the expounder and commentator and critic

and historian of a literature, must have archæological knowledge; he must be potentially an archæologist, whatever he may claim actually to be. He is one, apart altogether from his having (or not) such entirely technical and special skill as is required, say, for the deciphering of manuscripts and editing the text of an author. For if he is to understand an author, he must appreciate his allusions, and that involves antiquarian knowledge, knowledge of the society in the midst of which the author flourished. Take, for example, the learning required for the interpretation and appreciation of the plays of Shakespeare. Some of it is linguistic, an acquaintance with an earlier stage of English; much is of the habits and traditions and current phrases and by-words of the time, and that is purely antiquarian. Consider the essays and books that have been written to illustrate Shakespeare's legal knowledge, his use of the Bible, his mad people, his natural history, his witchcraft and demonology, and other details, every one being essentially an archæological study. The very stories which have been dramatised have had a previous existence, the tracing of which is a branch of antiquarian literary investigation by itself. Shakespeare is not the only English author by any means who needs explanations. Spenser is fuller of recondite allusions, and requires a more elaborate running commentary. Chaucer, as he is more remote from the present time, affords even a richer field for antiquarian research. How seldom, however, is this side of our older authors touched upon. The ordinary critic is full of praise or of condemnation of the art and skill of the poet, of his tragedy and comedy, of his moral or other lessons; he may rise to the interpretation of an obscure passage; he may attain to the power of suggesting a various reading, but he seldom alludes to the author's knowledge of his time or of the learning which he has worked into his verses. Chaucer, in those very dramatic tales of his, had certainly no more thought of archæology than had Burns when he wrote the "Holy Fair" or the "Jolly Beggars." Still, to understand not Chaucer alone, but even these latter, it is necessary not merely to know the language, but to put ourselves into contact with a condition of society that has passed away, and we must therefore have the "knowledge of former things" to help us. Already in Burns's own time customs had grown so obsolete, that when he wrote "Hallowe'en," one of the best folk-lore poems in existence, even he found it necessary to play the part of antiquary as well as of poet, and to provide it with introduc-

tion and explanatory notes. Indeed, as one of the members of our Society has shown in an interesting series of articles, Burns's ordinary poetry is full of allusions to the state of the country and of the people a century and a half ago, of marked interest to the Scottish antiquary.

It is not necessary, however, to go back to the classics, or to Dante, or Petrarch, or Rabelais, and such like authors who are unintelligible without a commentary, or to the older English authors, or to the satirists and political writers, for proof that much (if not all) literary interpretation must be fundamentally antiquarian. We do not need to go outside the most recent English literature for an illustration of the same fact. For many readers do not the allusions to past history and people, thoughts and customs, form one at least of the obstacles to the understanding, and therefore to the valuing of the poetry of Browning? Admitting that by his art he has made his men and women live and influence those of to-day, this does not alter the circumstance that to understand his poems, and to get the full flavour of them, involve far more knowledge, in many cases of a very out of the way kind, than has been hitherto found necessary for understanding contemporary poetry by most readers. "Sordello" was—possibly it still is—deemed unreadable; it contains condensed half-expressed allusions to little known events in Italian history. Fifty years ago, in 1840, when the poem was published by Moxon, probably nobody but Browning himself had such a minute knowledge of the time, and no one therefore was qualified to express an opinion, much less a judgment, on his work. Contemporary critics, measuring it by the only standard they had, that of their own ignorance, pronounced it unintelligible. What, too, is "The Ring and the Book" but an old story dramatised for a different age; but, like others of his works, making demands on extensive knowledge for thorough appreciation of all its allusions? Browning's erudition, historical and antiquarian, is a rock of offence to the "general reader."

In spite of all our struggles there is no escape from the influence of things old. Nay, as time goes on they dominate us more and more. Nothing that bears the impress of human thought and hands but has its archæology. A fully equipped antiquary would have pretty well to know everything. What can come amiss to him for investigation? he must be in touch with and sympathize with whatever has been said, made, done by man in the past,

even although he may have lost the clue to its meaning; much archæological work, indeed, is devoted solely to the recovery of these clues. Archæology is essentially a *human* study; it is the recognition by living men of all that remains of the thoughts and works of once living men like themselves, who have passed away, as those who study their relics will in their turn have to do. It is the practical expression of the instinct to which the American rhapsodist has given voice—

> "Think of the past;
> I warn you that, in a little while, others will find their past in you and your times."

Of the age and extent and interest of archæology there can be no real question. One may elect to ignore the fact, but still we are all under the influence of the people and the events of byegone times. Society now is the consequence of them; the history of our own and other countries tells us how it has all come about, and there has always been fortunately a succession of persons attracted by the study of old things and of previous ages, whose works remain to us, and are still prized, by all men of liberal culture, as telling us what they knew about those times and what they thought about them.

This recognition, as has been already said, is characteristic of all periods and races and literatures. It is singularly impressive and suggestive to find a writer whom we should regard distinctly as old, and himself a subject of antiquarian interest, referring, in much the same terms as we ourselves should use, to objects or events which seem to us to be very ancient. The pyramids were hardly nearer to the time of Herodotus than they are to our own; Stonehenge was a wonder and a puzzle to the antiquaries of centuries ago as it is to us. The execution of King Charles I. may be looked upon as a comparatively recent event in British history. Thomas Hearne, however, the antiquary, gives an extract from the "Northampton Mercury" to the effect that on December 24th, 1730, one Margaret Coe, died in the 104th year of her age. She was 21 years of age when the king was beheaded, and saw the executioner hold up the head. One hundred and sixty years ago, therefore, Hearne evidently looked upon the execution as so old a story that it was a wonder to come across an eye-witness of it; very much as a newspaper now

might record the death of one who took part in Trafalgar or Waterloo, or was present at the French Revolution and the execution of Louis XVI.

These writers, however, like all other human and temporal things, acquire for themselves another kind of interest. They too become antique; they themselves turn into objects of archæological investigation. The very newest and most recent book on antiquities grows old like its author, and sinks into oblivion. After the lapse of time, perhaps of years or even of centuries, fresh interest is awakened in it; it is revived to illustrate a new doctrine, to teach a new lesson, to form the text of a new book.

In strict keeping with development in time, the treatment of archæological subjects varies from generation to generation. The revered authorities of one period, against whose opinion hardly a single voice would be raised while they were still engaged in their work, pass away, and what they did is pushed aside in the rush of younger students eager to take their place. New views are introduced, old methods are found to be inadequate, in the course of fresh investigation fresh facts are forthcoming, and the fullest knowledge of a former time is found to be imperfect, not up to the present date, no longer sufficient for the new era. It is the best sign of archæology that it is endowed with this vitality, that new results are ever appearing, and that in consequence it changes and grows and develops. That every new fact is of supreme value cannot be the case, but, in so far as it is genuine and true, it will, sooner or later, be appreciated and find its place and its use in the general system.

Just, then, as there are histories of historical methods and results in which the successive methods of dealing with historical facts and theories are displayed and criticized, one would like to see a history of archæological investigation, from which one could learn how antiquities were estimated at different times, how the problems that are still under consideration were regarded during different epochs, and by those interested in them in successive generations; what entirely new lines of research have been opened up, at what time, and owing to what influences; how some have been cultivated ardently to the exclusion of others, and how these have ultimately attained their due importance in the archæological circle.

It would run far beyond the limits of an address like the present to indicate, however briefly, the scope of such a study. That there is no

history of the kind, so far as I am aware, indicates perhaps that the subject is too vast to be undertaken by any one person. Reference, however, may be made to one or two illustrations of what might be included in a comprehensive history.

It is correct to say, I think, that for centuries by far the largest and most carefully cultivated field of antiquarian investigation has been that of Greek and Roman civilization. The study of the remains of these peoples, their language, literature, philosophy, religion, laws, politics, customs, immoralities, war, sciences, technology, and art absorbed the attention of a vast majority of students and scholars. Classical learning was the mark of culture, to the exclusion of all native literature, history, politics, science, art. Libraries were made up of books connected with the so-called learned languages. Even within one's own recollection manuals of Greek and Roman antiquities were familiar works. The school-boy was taught about cohorts and triumphs and the Peloponnesian war, and the whole details of the Greek theatre and the games of the Roman Circus; but not about the antiquities of his own country (not even the Roman occupation of it), its history and politics and literature, its armies and drama. There was no instruction (I question if there is any now) in English, Scotch, or Irish antiquities. To employ present-day phraseology, "That was not good enough." No man, however well skilled in the history and antiquities of his own country, who knew its philosophy or its science, who was thoroughly familiar with its natural history, would have got credit for learning and none for culture, if he had not had a so-called classical education; as if a Greek would have neglected his own country for the sake of any other—would have studied the language and literature of another country to the deliberate exclusion of his own. Whereas the high-water mark of our culture has been familiarity with the literature and language of the nation which knew no nation, wished to know no nation but themselves, the nation which, if judged by our standard of seeking our highest interest out of ourselves, must have been the narrowest and least cultured of antiquity!

It is a component in the history of development well worth considering how the mediæval poverty of culture, which justifiably welcomed with such enthusiasm the discovery or revival or rehabilitation of the Greek and Latin languages and antiquities, hampers us even now and monopolizes

education. At this very moment, when the antiquities of the nations from whom the Greeks learned are investigating, when there is the whole of modern philosophy and literature and science, vast subjects both of investigation and speculation, and of practical utility as well, even now legislation is practically pronouncing that no man shall be called cultured who has not been taught Latin or Greek. The whole of modern science is to count for nothing in training the human mind compared with what can be little more than a rudimentary knowledge of a dead language like Latin! But it cannot always be so. This traditional supremacy in Europe of Greek and Latin learning as a *universal* criterion of culture will give place to a rational use of such learning for those minds or those professions to which it is specially adapted, but it will cease to be affirmed that a man's scientific attainments are to be stigmatised as uncultured because a knowledge of Greek or of any other language, Sanskrit or Arabic for instance, is not required by him.

During the time, however, when so-called classical learning was at its plenitude and absorbed most attention, there were men who did devote themselves to other topics than the classics, who found more congenial occupation in the study of the antiquities and languages and literature and legends of other nations, or displayed a culture parallel to that of the Greeks by taking a rational and genuine interest in the annals and monuments of their own country.

These were the predecessors of the modern archæologists; men like Camden and Leland, who travelled to see what actually remained of the works of former times, and recorded what they themselves observed, and not what was written about them in other books. It was, of course, under depressing disadvantages that such men pursued their labours. Not to speak of the hardship and danger of travelling in their days, they were without the stimulus of many labourers in the same field; their own work appealed to the most meagre of publics; they had, through the limitation of their own lives, abilities and opportunities, to leave subjects uninvestigated or to substitute conjecture for fact to the detriment of the accuracy of their results; they had to contend with the neglect of the cultivators of these remains by the scholars and philosophers, Greek and Latin, and with the ignorance of the great mass of their countrymen, in fact, they had to

display a taste for national antiquities in the midst of a chilling national indifference. A worthy attempt to direct attention to this subject was made at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The title of the book containing it is itself a pathetic appeal, which displays the author's sentiments as much as his treatment of the theme. I refer to the charming little volume by Richard Verstegan, entitled: "*A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities. Concerning the most noble and renoumed English Nation*," printed at Amsterdam in 1605, and sold at London. It is a dissertation on the Saxon people in England, their religion, language and customs, and origin; an important point consisting in distinguishing them most strongly from the British, that is the Welsh and Cornish and from the Scots and Irish, or broadly, from the Celtic populations. It is full of interesting ethnological and linguistic discussions, some of which remain open to this day, while others may after long examination be considered as closed. To the student of the history and development of archæology it is a landmark, or rather a *time* mark, a monument indicating the progress of research. If not so much for its contents, though it still is of value for certain contemporary facts, or for its deductions, based as they are upon limited knowledge and upon unsifted traditions and beliefs, the book is still of historical interest for the problems in ethnology that it propounds, for the calm and reasonable treatment of these problems, and for the attempt of the author, who after all was only half an Englishman, to rouse an interest among his countrymen in their own origin and descent. In the reign of King James I. English scholars and students had seemingly forgotten that their own people must have begun at some time and had come from somewhere; but the history of their own country had been moved farther away from their daily life than the history of the Greeks and Romans. I have no evidence that the laudable effort of Verstegan met with any success, or that it was soon followed up by similar researches of others. The time for the study of the antiquities of the Saxon people and their race-affinities and language in a more comprehensive spirit had not yet arrived. One would require to enter into the progress of ethnographic and linguistic investigation for two hundred and fifty years to understand the present method of dealing with the questions which Verstegan propounded.

Somewhat later in the seventeenth century appeared two books which

would occupy a place in archæological history, as anticipating modern research in different sections of anthropology and in folk-lore. They are both written in the sesquipedalian jargon of the time, against which Verstegan had protested a generation earlier, but all the more on that account they may interest the student of the history of archæology. One of these, I need do no more than name it, is the "*Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors*," by Sir Thomas Browne, in which he criticizes with much acumen the almost incredible number of mistakes and misconceptions, especially in natural history, cosmography, physics, medicine and surgery, which were current among educated and uneducated alike in his time. Sir Thomas Browne's book is the display of the ignorance of the world and of the works of creation, which was the outcome of a culture which had restricted itself overmuch to a knowledge of Greek and Latin, and resolutely ignored the possibility of any other kind of learning and acquirement. Even Sir Thomas Browne was handicapped in his search after the truth of things, by having most of his readers educated to believe that it was heresy to attack these ancients in the very matters in which he was demonstrating their errors.

The other work, which is a genuine early piece of anthropology, is the "*Anthropometamorphosis, or The Artificiall Changling*," by John Bulwer, printed at London in 1650 and in 1663. In this very curious and interesting treatise there is given an account of the ways in which human beings have decorated and deformed their bodies, sometimes out of ideas of beauty, sometimes out of superstitious and religious beliefs. It too is couched partially in the macaronic Latin, which did duty for English with a certain class of writers, but the matter atones for its euphuism and might still be made use of. The author gathered from travellers and historians all the facts he could about the decoration and alteration of every part of the body from the top of the head down to the toes, and in many cases gives illustrations of the text which do not fail to impress his reader, whether they represent fact or fancy. The descriptions are diversified with anecdotes, moral reflections, and cynical remarks, which make the book a readable one. The same topic has been pursued in a scientific manner of late years, and occupies a place in treatises on the races of man; but Bulwer's book, though it broke new ground, ap-

pealed in vain to the English of the seventeenth century for intelligent appreciation. It had no successor, it could have none, till anthropology became a recognised branch of scientific natural history, partly by the advance in knowledge of natural history in general, by the completer recognition of man's homologies with other animals, partly by the enormously increased acquaintance with the customs and languages and rites of foreign and especially of so-called savage or uncivilized races, during the present century through travel and colonization. A work somewhat resembling it, narrower as being devoted to one sex only, more comprehensive as including not only women's decoration, distortion, and deformation, but their customs on different occasions of life, is the German monograph, "*Das Weib*," by Dr. Ploss, of which a new edition by Max Bartels has just been completed.

One more illustration of the importance, or at least of the interest of the history of archæology, may be taken from a quite different branch of inquiry.

It may be known to certain of my present audience that as early as the middle of the sixteenth century there had come or were coming to Western Europe, along with more familiar works, a number of Greek manuscripts, treating of what was called in them the Sacred Art, or the great art, which at a later time was better known as the art of transmutation, or, to borrow the name which the Arabs contributed, Alchemy. A small part of the contents of the manuscripts was translated into Latin by an Italian, Dominico Pizimenti, and was published in 1572-3. Much discussion as to the genuineness and value of these MSS. arose in the seventeenth century between Borrichius, Conringius, Reinesius, and other scholars, naturalists and physicians, but it was largely made up of assertion, counter-assertion, and recrimination. Practically no appeal was made to the MSS. themselves, although Leo Allatius, the librarian of the Vatican Library, about 1661, meditated an edition of them, and others entertained a similar intention. It was reserved for two chemists of the latter half of the nineteenth century to give a full digest of all that was previously known about them, and a critical examination of their history, and to bring out a worthy and scholar-like edition of them.

In the prosecution of my own inquiries into these topics I have been

impressed over and over again by the fact that certain researches are possible only at certain epochs. A certain amount of previous preparation is involved, the soil has to be tilled, so to speak; then, when that is ready, the crop seems somehow to come naturally and easily of itself, while those who threw in the seed from time to time saw afar off the possibility of it ripening, and rejoiced in the prospect, are not allowed to enter into the enjoyment of the harvest. No doubt, Pizimenti and Borrichius and Leo Allatius, perhaps at an earlier time the Arabians, men who, like Dschabir Ben Hayyan in 760, eleven hundred years ago, learned his chemistry from those whom even he calls "the ancients," would have wondered at the production of such a work as that of Berthelot's on the Greek alchemists, finished in 1888.

Such a publication could hardly have been undertaken before the present year of grace. There had to be got rid of at least three hundred years of prejudice and active hostility to the whole subject. This hostility has died away only within living memory, because the transmutation of metals, the subject of it, has been seen to be futile in the present state of our knowledge. It is harmless, and every one is indifferent to it as a practical possibility. No one therefore who cares now to investigate it as a past chapter in the history of chemistry is open to the charge either of believing in or attempting to realize it. But to render this change possible has taken centuries of the study of the chemistry which grew out of it. More than that, however, the palæographic skill to interpret the manuscripts, the modern processes of photography, which make *facsimiles* possible, the scientific knowledge—not in chemistry alone but in other departments—necessary to grasp and include and interpret the scientific ignorance of the writers and explain their imperfectly understood aims, the knowledge of previous and of collateral antiquity, of the manners and customs and knowledge of the Egyptians, of the religious, philosophic, and occult systems of the ancient nations, had all of them to be brought by unceasing previous investigation to their present condition, before there were data which could be employed to throw even what light we have upon the problems—very mysterious looking, probably because in their own confusion the writers did not know how to state them—which are presented to us in these curious Greek manuscripts.

I have perhaps enlarged unduly upon this topic, but it happens to have been prominently in my thoughts in connection with a paper on Pizimenti's translation above mentioned which I communicated to the Philosophical Society only last night. But although it is a very narrow basis to start from, I feel that the principle which it illustrates is of general application. It is simply this, that in archæology, as in every really living subject of research, there is no pause. The archæologist, like every other inquirer, must be prepared to let his theories go, his authorities be set aside, his whole system remodelled, whenever fresh discovery and the unyielding necessity of facts demand the sacrifice. The history of archæological inquiry, or archæology itself regarded as a subject of antiquarian study, would exhibit this principle in the widest possible way, for there we should see how, by the increase and sifting and confirming of knowledge, not in one branch only, but over the whole field of intellectual activity, the questions of one generation put on a different look to the generations which follow, drop exhausted out of view altogether, or are treated in a different way and in a different connection; how the authorities of one age upon any antiquarian topic are superseded—by no demerit necessarily of their own—but simply by the progress of time, the oncoming of others and their own removal from their work; how entirely new problems present themselves for consideration.

Whether an individual or a society is able to accomplish much or little for archæology in the large sense of the term, it is well, at all events, that one should not lose sight of such a general aspect of the subject, displayed when it itself can possibly be viewed from the antiquarian side. After all, however, the practical question before us is, what can be done for archæology by our own society? Archæological pursuit is so purely a matter of personal taste and nonprofessional interest, that any one inclined to follow it at all will take up only the branch of it which really allures him, and for the prosecution of which the material is within limits accessible. Not indeed that the latter has much to do with the choice, for it happens that just the most out of the way and unpromising field is what to some one offers the greatest pleasure to cultivate. Fortunately there is no taste that cannot be gratified to the full: there is no lack of variety in the old subjects, and there are new ones waiting for workers.

Is there, for instance, any one in the society who is prepared to give an account of the antiquities of a perfectly modern invention—postage stamps? I say the antiquities, for the early stamps are as extinct as Egyptian scarabs; a Mulready envelop might be a mummy case. The subject is already of much interest historically, artistically, chemically, mechanically, politically, geographically, even legally and criminally. There is already a philatelic literature affording materials for the bibliographer; there are the lives of the Nimrods of stamp-collecting who spare no labour, and give fabulous sums to secure the rarities which it is the hopeless ambition of the poor collector to acquire. These great collections are already becoming historical, and one at least—Mr. Tapling's—has been recently acquired by the British Museum. Can this Society not boast of one Timbrologist?

In respect of abundance and variety of material, archæology, as a whole, resembles that section of it which, in Germany at least, has for the designation of the place consecrated to its worship, the *Antiquariat*, monopolized the whole name. The noble pursuit of library forming—some malign it as book-collecting—has the merit of affording infinite variety to every book-lover individually, and to the whole genus collectively. There is, of course, the risk that in following up one's own tastes and proclivities one may get a little indifferent to, not to say depreciatory of those of one's fellow-collectors. The lover, for example, of books printed in the fifteenth century has little in common with him whose hobby it is to amass the literature of railways or bicycling. The man whose specialty is angling will not likely be caught by detective stories, Newgate calendars, trials, last dying speeches and confessions. The amateur of curiosa and facetiæ need not fear as a competitor for the oddities he prizes the historian who wants tracts and books about the Puritans. The modern botanist would disdain a treatise on the evolution of the struggle for existence in the Wars of the Roses. But the irresistible charm of a really great library is that it is an unprejudiced unexclusive gathering of all such special gatherings, and that in it every man finds something to his taste, something to help him. So with archæology as a whole. Each one is able to follow out the line of inquiry which suits him best. But when we have become too deeply engrossed with our own work and tend to unduly overvalue it, it is profitable—so as to avoid the cramping influence of specialism—to reflect that, after all, the end of our labour is to

illustrate as fully as possible, and on every side, it may be the life of the individual, or the state of society, or the condition of some locality, or of the nation to which we belong, or some general phenomenon connected with the existence of the race over a given area or during a given period of time. The idea that every firmly established fact is of value in itself, as a nucleus for the addition of other facts, and as a sure basis for a useful generalization, dignifies even the apparently most insignificant detail. In every case it is better to have knowledge than ignorance, better complete and perfect knowledge, better fact than inference, though it be but of a date which is ascertained not without much labour and criticism, than to have guess work and uncertainty. A society such as ours, while it encourages every one's specialty by affording it a sympathetic hearing, counteracts specialism by enabling each one to learn what is doing in other departments than his own, and to show him the enthusiasms of others for subjects of which he is ignorant.

At the conclusion of the present annual report there is a list of comprehensive topics which may be regarded as those to which the society mainly restricts itself. A local society is necessarily in a better position to deal with the antiquities among which it is placed, and with the examination of which it unavoidably identifies itself (since it is the chief reason of its being called into existence), than any other. It has the personal interest of its members in places or events or people, with which they are associated possibly by birth or by family connection or by tradition or simply by residence. But here again the Society as a whole must, like the individual, avoid falling into unsympathetic specialism. It must be remembered that whatever may be discovered in any of the branches of the programme, and especially in prehistoric or Roman or architectural antiquities, must be correlated as far as possible with similar antiquities elsewhere, so as to get at the full meaning of them.

That we, here in Glasgow, are lacking in opportunity for such comparison is a patent fact. Museum facilities there are almost none. I do not say that Glasgow cannot manage "to flourish" without a museum of local antiquities, but I feel quite safe in saying that such a museum would be extremely popular and useful. In London there are the beginnings of one for the city in the Guildhall. In Paris there is the extraordinary collection of Parisian local antiquities of all kinds from the stone age down

to the Commune in the Musée Carnavalet. The library of that museum is said to contain 80,000 volumes and 70,000 maps and plans and pictures of Paris. Glasgow could never expect to make a collection like these. The waves of history have not surged round it as they have round these great centres of life and civilization, leaving behind them all sorts of wrecks; the mutations of a score of centuries are not traceable in the city of to-day. Yet Glasgow is surely old enough, and still unmodernized enough, to yield something illustrative of its past existence.

I do not think that the multiplication and competition of museums is at all desirable. While it is of first importance that an object should find a safe resting place somewhere, it is of equal importance that, as far as possible, it should be placed alongside objects of similar character for mutual illustration. It is only by minute comparison of seemingly trivial points that one gets at the meaning and truth of things to begin with, and then to more comprehensive views. But there is a limit also to this accumulation of all objects in one centre. The desiderated comparison is more efficiently served by a local museum for the annals, topography and antiquities of a town or district than by a central museum, unless it be of the very largest dimensions, larger than anything in this country. The museum at Colchester, for instance, with its Roman remains located in the Castle, or at York, with its Roman relics in the Hospitium of St. Mary's Abbey, or at Northampton, or in the grim Norman Keep at Newcastle, or at the Chesters, serves perhaps a more useful purpose than if these remains had been transferred to the British Museum. Now, it keeps alive the interest of the people in the place where these have been discovered; it reminds them that their town is a very old one, and it impels some persons, if not many, to pay special attention to the early history of the place; to everyone it is a revival of Roman life in its own home; other similar remains found in the district naturally go to this collection. In fact it keeps in much more vigorous life the taste for archæology and for the preservation of ancient monuments. All these advantages would have been lost if the collection had been distributed and scattered say in the British Museum.

Here in Glasgow there are local antiquities—those relating to the rise and growth of the place itself—maps, pictures, histories, plans, models,

and a dozen different things which are of special interest to Glasgow inhabitants, but of comparatively little to the inhabitants of another place, who feel quite intensely about the importance of their own antiquities. To Glasgow one would naturally come to study its history and antiquities rather than go say to the British or Ashmolean Museum, or to Liverpool or Inverness or Edinburgh or Dublin. No one I mean who was attracted to the study of Glasgow topography and history would think of pursuing it outside of the place itself; he would come *here* and investigate it. But where would he find what he wanted; almost entirely in private hands. There is no public place in the city, the property of the city, cared for and fostered by the city, where its growth and past history can be seen and followed. The present seems a suitable time for something being done to supply this defect, when the city has now assumed such important dimensions, and when it is likely to be provided with accommodation for artistic and ordinary museum purposes commensurate with its size. One fears that the antiquarian and historical side of the growth of the city may be forgotten, though that to most persons is more intelligible and attractive than its geology or natural history. It is to be hoped, and this society should not lose sight of it, that in the new Art Galleries ample space will be allocated for a Glasgow collection. There is abundance of material, as the collection in the Bishop's Castle of the recent Exhibition showed; much has certainly been lost and destroyed in the past for want of a suitable place for preserving it in; many presents would flow into a local museum, just as into the Glasgow department of the Mitchell Library books have gone to be preserved, which otherwise might have been lost or destroyed, or might have wandered away from the place where they were first produced.

There is no lack of local enthusiasm for the city from the antiquarian point of view, and it can be very safely left in the hands of those who in recent years have written its history, edited some of its characteristic literary productions, preserved by photograph and otherwise the remains of old houses of historic and family interest, told the story of its streets, squares, monuments, and public buildings, and embalmed the memory of that dear old dingy quaint building in the High Street for all who knew it and loved it. I do not think the Glasgow public can ever be grateful enough to the Senate

of the University, who have preserved for them the Lion and Unicorn Staircase and the Gateway of the old College.

But there is need after all of a place where Glasgow relics can be preserved and exhibited, and where generation after generation can be brought to profit by the lessons taught by "things old."

There is one other thing that might be worth undertaking by our society. I am open to correction if I am in error, but I do not think there is any authentic list of prehistoric and historic remains in and around Glasgow. We all know that there are vitrified forts—(I confess to having a weakness for vitrified forts, they seem to be so perfectly useless as forts, or for any other conceivable purpose, except to show that they are vitrified, and to puzzle people as to why they were ever made)—standing stones, cromlechs, castles, and what not; but there is no guide to them, no reference to where they are described, or anything more than the personal knowledge of those who may have visited them. An authentic catalogue of such remains by the society would be of much interest and of undoubted value to all antiquaries. It would draw the attention of the people of a district to objects worthy of their notice and to the value of the remains they possess, and it would do something towards the protection and preservation of such remains.

The field, gentlemen, is absolutely unlimited except by the capacity of the investigator. There is a superabundance of employment for every one, and there is no eight hours' movement for limiting the work. I can only express the hope at the opening of a new session that more of the good results will be forthcoming which have characterized the society in previous years.

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